

The Fool of Joy

By Tom MacInnes

TOM MACINNES is a Canadian poet of striking originality and high artistic excellence. He lives in the Celtic rather than in the English or Latin tradition. He sometimes achieves a piquant effect hard to define; there is an astringent tang to his verse. Through the too impecunious and sordid atmosphere of his scenario you are continually made aware of far-come, unexpected fragrances. The Ballades and Rhymes of this book are a Sequence. Together they constitute a unit, an unique record and expression of one attitude toward life. The picaresque in literature is found in prose, best perhaps in Spanish, beginning with *Gil Blas*. But so far as I know, there is in verse no sustained picaresque exposition of life other than this Sequence. If the dictum 'The greatest poet is he who makes us most conscious of life' be true, then Tom MacInnes must be regarded as one in a thousand.—*John W. Garvin*.

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THE FOOL OF JOY

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By

Tom MacInnes



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PUBLISHERS :: :: :: TORONTO

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By TOM MACINNES

PRINTED IN CANADA

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THE FOOL OF JOY

1918

*WHAT place can there be for a minstrel now
Against these ghastly times?
For one who would sing to a light guitar
His picaroonish rhymes?
While the pain and filth of war, and the waste
Go on, and we lack for bread?
O the Dark Fool is loose in the world—
And the Fool of Joy is dead!*

BALLADE OF YOUTH REMAINING

PARDON if I ravel rhyme
Out of my head disorderly!
Forgetting how the rats of time
Are nibbling at the bones of me!

But while upon my legs I'm free
Out in the sunlight I intend
To dine with God prodigiously:
Youth is a splendid thing to spend!

Here's to the man who travels still
In the light of young discoveries!
Here's to the fellow of lusty will,
Who drives along and hardly sees
For glamour of great realities
The doom of age! This line I send
To all who sing hot litanies:
Youth is a splendid thing to spend!

But 'tis not all a matter of years:
'Tis a way of living handily
In a game with Life, while yet appears
A glory near of victory;
With ventures high, and gallantry
Twinkling 'round the nearest bend
Where damsels and fine dangers be:
Youth is a splendid thing to spend!

Fellows, come and ride with me
Swiftly now to the edge of the end!
Holding the Stars of Joy in fee!—
Youth is a splendid thing to spend!

BALLADE OF THE FREE LANCE

LET me face some bright hazard
Against the rowdy World for you!
A foe to strike, a friend to guard,
Or the looting of some rascal crew,
O, the like of this I'm taking to
As on my way I make advance,
And queer vicissitudes come through,
Full of adventure and multiple chance!

So far, you see, I've not been slain,
Tho' now and then I've sought to raid
Some richly opportune domain,
Only to find the plan I made
Baffled by engine or ambuscade;
But I salute the circumstance,
And slip aside; oh, the World is laid
Full of adventure and multiple chance!

And while I'm free to ride ahead,
With here or there some prize in view,
Few dangers of the way I dread,
Tho' oft my hungriness I rue:
Still, betimes a crust will do
Cracking fine to nonchalance,
And every day the World is new,
Full of adventure and multiple chance!

For me the road of many directions—
For me the rhyme of long romance!
For me the World of imperfections—
Full of adventure and multiple chance!

BALLADE OF ACTION

NO fat security hath charms
To keep me always satisfied:
What ho! Excursions and alarms!
A scheme, a plot, a ripping tide
Of rude events to prick my pride,
Or crack the shell of my conceit
Upon the edge of things untried!
This is the fate that I would meet.

Now let some bully thing intrude,
And bugle to the soul of me!
I grow stale with quietude,
And this too safe monotony:
O good my friend or enemy
Call me back to the battling street!
For high low variety—
This is the fate that I would meet.

To more than keep oneself alive
Is the way to live when all is said:
To sight a prize, and chase and strive
With strong will and cunning head
For something surely more than bread,
Or from the bitter steal the sweet,
And steal it while the risk is red—
This is the fate that I would meet.

To conquer finely, or to sink
Debonair against defeat,
This is the rarest grace I think—
This is the fate that I would meet.

BALLADE OF DETACHMENT

THE Lords of Karma deal the cards,
But the game we play in our own way:
Now as for me, and as regards
The gain or loss from day to day,
I go detached; I mean to say
That I live largely as I please,
Whether it does or does not pay
Among the inequalities.

With duties not too much engrossed,
With profits not too much concerned,
Not to glean to the uttermost,
Nor grieve for what I might have earned,
This for my soul's sake I have learned,
Reaching for sweeter things than these:
Pennies and fractions I have spurned
Among the inequalities.

O, damnable palavering
Of pedagogues too regular!
I'd rather be a tramp, or sing
For my living at a bar,
Or peddle peanuts, far by far,
Than lose my reasonable ease
In tow of rule and calendar
Among the inequalities.

Content if I may go a bit
In my own way before I cease;
Living trimly by my wit
Among the inequalities.

BALLADE ON THE WAY

LET saints abstract on subtle planes
Revolving occult theories,
Unravel all till naught remains,
And vanish then howe'er they please!
But as for me, in place of these,
The savor of flesh and blood! The zest
And blaze of vast idolatries!
This is the object of my quest.

Let saints who stoop to lift the woe
From off the living and the dead,
On with their heavy labors go
Till all be healed and comforted!
But as for me, I seek instead
Assurance to the sparkling crest
Of ecstasies unmerited!
This is the object of my quest.

Beauty to me hath been a name
Holier than all God's avatars:
The unconcerned eternal Flame
Whose fitful gleams between the bars
Of space and time unto the stars
And outer vacancies attest
Elysium that nothing mars!
This is the object of my quest.

O, let me for a moment merge
Within the glory vaguely guessed!
Yea, tho' I perish on the verge,
This is the object of my quest.

BALLADE OF GOOD WOMEN

WOMEN I value as they serve
Us men with all their qualities:
The kindly eye, the winsome curve,
And voice attune for melodies,

O, high we hold the worth of these!
But this is the best a man can say
Of factory girls or fine ladies:
Good women give themselves away.

So have our comforts much increased,
Despite the neuter maids who cling
To fad or fancy, book or priest,
Perversely 'gainst their fashioning:
Lord, in the end 'tis a sickly thing,
Still order it for us I pray
That mainly without reckoning
Good women give themselves away.

Let sing who will in praise of her
By some unique ambition led,
Queen at college or theatre,
Or classed in a convent with the dead!
I honor the girls who choose instead
The ancient duties, day by day,
As wives and mothers and makers of bread:
Good women give themselves away.

Little I care what they be doing,
What creed they follow or disobey,
If evermore for our renewing
Good women give themselves away.

BALLADE OF VIRTUES

WE make too much of right and wrong:
Three virtues sum it all, nor less
Nor more, and we who crawl along
By light of them our way may guess
Out of the world's ungodly mess,
Whether we look to the cross, or whether
To idols of genial heathenness:
We who are all in the mud together.

Courage, cleanliness, charity:
There are no virtues fixt but these:
On these, the sole essential three,
We base our rising tendencies,
And various moralities
To suit our age, or maybe the weather,
Or stress of chance necessities:
We who are all in the mud together.

Many to ancient names, and some
To newer creeds and altars cling:
But shining down the ages come
Three virtues, never altering,
By which alone our souls we bring
Out of the primal ooze and nether
Gulfs whence we are clambering:
We who are all in the mud together.

Courage, cleanliness, charity:
Hold by these to the end of the tether,
For only these may lead us free:
We who are all in the mud together.

BALLADE OF MEDDLERS

A PLAGUE on those who would regulate
Every detail of our troubled lives!
Let's eat and drink and fight and mate
And leave to God what then survives!

Thus every man for himself contrives
His inexact best quality:

Ministers, medicals, meddlesome wives,
Go your way and let folks be!

O anxious saviours of men and such
Thanks for your help in our evil plight!
But please don't save us all too much!

When God woke up and called for light
He set things turning from left to right,
A good enough sign it seems to me
That we shall turn thus without you—quite:
Go your way and let folks be!

For man and beast and imp and elf
One rule is writ in language terse:
Each must answer to himself
In the sequence of the universe:
And we may crawl from the primal curse
Fast if we choose, or leisurely,
But meddlers aye make matters worse:
Go your way and let folks be!

Maybe a helping hand is the best
Signal from God that ever we see:
But that's one thing, and for the rest,
Go your way and let folks be!

BALLADE OF FRIENDS

I CHANGE myself, and so no more
Will cry against inconstancy:
The chiefest pals I had of yore
Without offence may tire of me:
And they are free, and I am free,
To seek new faces down the line—
But yet I say wherever I be:
All good fellows are friends of mine!

No talk of race or caste or creed;
No fault of hair, no shade of skin,
Shall bar me of my choice, indeed
The sweetest nut may lie within
The toughest shell; 'twould be a sin
To lose a comrade, or resign
My company for cause so thin:
All good fellows are friends of mine!

They fail us now and then, of course;
And some are rascals more or less:
Some cajole us to endorse,
And leave us in the lurch: O, yes;
But to relieve our loneliness
If only for a day is fine:
For that we owe them some, confess:
All good fellows are friends of mine!

Whether at sea or whether on shore,
Or at the job or over the wine,
Whether on two legs, whether on four—
All good fellows are friends of mine!

BALLADE OF JACQUELINE

I MET by chance a milliner,
A girl by name of Jacqueline:
June-sweet was the voice of her,
And wonderful eyes of aquamarine,
Pale blue and pale green,
Appealed from her face of ivory,
Too wild to care how she were seen
Down town o' nights with me.

In a fussy shop thro' daylight hours
Trimly she fashioned vanities;
Scraps of birds, and crazy flowers,
Trifles of straw and fripperies,
To put on the heads of fine ladies:
But after six, when she was free,
Jacqueline went as you please
Down town o' nights with me.

Jacqueline was a good chum
For gay streets and vaudeville;
And I spent my coin, when I had some,
For the pleasure it was to see her feel
The light dream of the moment real,
Or hearken awhile to her velvety
Low laughter, over a meal
Down town o' nights with me.

Jacqueline has gone away
To marry a man of property;
Jacqueline no more will play
Down town o' nights with me.

BALLADE OF THE PICAROON

I KNEW him for a picaroon
Among the purlieus of the town:
At free lunch in a beer saloon
To wash the cheese and pickles down,
With pretzels hard and salt and brown,
We drank and talked of all our schemes
To banish Fortune's chronic frown:
He was a fine fellow of dreams.

He loved the light piquant details
Of life beyond mere livelihood;
And while he covered many trails
More tricks he played and girls he wooed
And bottles emptied than he should
For that success the World esteems:
But after a fashion he made good:
He was a fine fellow of dreams.

Because I heard his death to-night
Told in the hotel corridor
I left the crowd for the cool starlight
And the lone ways: my heart was sore
That I should see his face no more
Where the wheel turns, and the light gleams,
And the air reels to the World's uproar:
He was a fine fellow of dreams.

My friend he was and he died too soon:
'Tis always too soon for his like it seems:
But he lived while he lived, that picaroon—
He was a fine fellow of dreams.

VILLANELLE OF MUTTON

VERY sick and tired I am
Of stewed prunes, and apples dried,
And this our mutton that once was lamb !

I will make no grand salaam
For the stale cakes the gods provide !
Very sick and tired I am !

My indignant diaphragm
Would cover something fresh, untried,—
Not this mutton that once was lamb !

How every verse and epigram
Of hope the lagging years deride !
Very sick and tired I am !

Must I always then be calm,
And talk as one quite satisfied
With this our mutton that once was lamb ?

Frankly, I don't give a dam
For taste of things too long denied !
Very sick and tired I am
Of this our mutton that once was lamb !

MIRELLE OF FOUND MONEY

I GOT a thousand dollars to-day
By chance and undeservedly:
But nary a one of my debts will I pay:

Sure it never was meant to be spent that way:
'Tis a gift from my fairy godmother, you see.

Except of course to my landlady,
And some on account to the tailor Malone:
And there'll be a new dress, and a hat maybe,
For the lame girl who is good to me:
But the rest of these dollars are all my own.

A thousand dollars and all for my own:
The thought of it runs like a tune through my head:
So long it is since I have known
One lavish hour, one fully blown
Rose of joy unheralded!

Tho' we of the world must grind for bread
'Tis a plan I hold in small esteem:
And while I can taste I let no dread
Of later want contract the spread
Of my desire for cakes and cream.

Wrapt in myself, obscure, supreme,
I slip thro' streets and quarters gay,
And the comic crowd I see in a dream,
But glory be—this is no dream:
I got a thousand dollars to-day!

BALLADE OF FINE EATING

HIGH up I climbed in a cherry tree:
Heigho, how the years have fled!
June and the World lay under me,
While the juicy fruit just overhead
Hung clustering thick and ripe and red,—

For a boy of ten 'twas a glorious sight:

Say, do you wonder now that I said:
Bully for my big appetite?

Far in the North I sought for gold:

Foolish I was and most unfit:
Starving, alone, and numb with cold,

When I found on the trail a dog-biscuit:
How I gnawed its edges bit by bit!

'Twas a savory thing to crunch and bite,
And I fed on every crumb of it:

Bully for my big appetite!

But give me a friend this night for a feast,

And one well-served exquisite dish!

He may have what he will of bird or beast,

Or take his choice of fat sea-fish;

And we'll drink of the best thing liquorish,
Bottled in years of old delight,

To wake on our palate the lost relish:

Bully for my big appetite!

Me for a nook in a fine kafay,

With any potvaliant rake to-night!

And if to-morrow the Devil's to pay—

Bully for my big appetite!

MIRELLE OF THE GOOD BED

THREE'S nothing so good as a good bed
When a body is over and done with day!
I'd like a place to lay my head
In a clean room, unfrequented
And dark, unless for a moon-ray.

O Angel of Dreams, without delay
Then let me from this World be gone!
Within a temple I would pray
Where golden odors float alway
Onward to oblivion.

Or haply may I be withdrawn
From pain and care and manners mean
Into some fairy tower whereon
The glim bejewelled gonfalon
Of blue enchantery is seen!

But a lady I know might come between
Laughing, and lead me far astray
On the flowery edge of a wild ravine
Where wild cascades of waters green
Flash in the pleasant light of May.

Thus let me dream the night away,
Or slumber dreamless with the dead!
Life may resume, but now I say,
Being too weary of the day,
There's nothing so good as a good bed!

BALLADE OF THE HOUSE OF EASE

HELLO, MARIE! You sweet old girl,
You of the Province cool and true,
I'm fagged and done with the City whirl,
And I've come for quieting to you!

I'm out of the game, Marie; I'm through,
And want but a chair in the sunlight placed,
With nothing to do, dear, nothing to do—
Give me now these hours to waste!

Something to eat? Well, after while
I'd like a chicken fricassee
Creamed in good Acadian style
With ketchup and things peppery,
And a twist of bread and pot o' tea:
A supper that to the Queen's taste
If you will cook it! But, Marie,
Give me now these hours to waste!

My Lady in your House of Ease,
Clean of all pretence and mask,
Let me lounge just as I please,
Tossing from me every task!
Let me like some lizard bask
Fatly with my soul effaced
In the sun! No more I ask—
Give me now these hours to waste!

For I've been troubled overlong,
And I'd be quit of stress and haste,
And quit of doing, right or wrong,—
Give me now these hours to waste!

BALLADE OF GOLDEN DAYS

I WEARY of living from hand to mouth,
Battling for mean necessities:
I'm in a desert, and a drouth
Comes over all the oases
Where I have sought myself to ease
In lawful and unlawful ways:
I had no care for things like these
Far away in the Golden Days.

Let me go where my father went—
My father who was good to me!
This World has grown so virulent
And sodden now with misery!
But once we fought it joyously,
Ever on some crusade ablaze
For spicy isles o' the wind-swept sea—
Far away in the Golden Days.

O, with some glad intoxicant
These wasted nerves of mine relieve!
Do me a magic, and enchant
These sordid chambers to conceive
In crimson colors, while I weave
My fancies to the airy phase
Of things he taught me to believe—
Far away in the Golden Days.

Nay, what now? What aura strange—
What glamour of new life allays
This old despair? Again I range
Far away in the Golden Days.

DEFEAT

Villanelle

WE may dream of what hath been,
But this will alter all our ways:
This is the thing that was not foreseen.

Tho' we avoid the rabble gaze
Yet must we keep some face to show:
We are untouched, the World says.

Haply the World may never know
The marish grief and bitterness
That covers us; 'tis better so.

For we who gloried to excess
Now only ask that none may see
These hours averted, comfortless.

Of our defeat there yet may be
Some gray reward in after days:
O, ache my heart—but quietly!

While the shadow with us stays
We may dream of what hath been;
But this will alter all our ways—
This is the thing that was not foreseen.

NULLA BONA

Villanelle

THREE seems no good alternative:
I must do what I deplore:
I mean well, but I mean to live.

By corners now I dodge furtive;
From debts I slip thro' many a door:
There seems no good alternative.

Maybe I'll rise superlative
Some day my credit to restore:
I mean well, but I mean to live.

Gone like water thro' a sieve
Is all the cash I won of yore:
There seems no good alternative.

Sure, if I had it I would give
Freely to friend and creditor:
I mean well, but I mean to live.

But now, alas, a fugitive
I must fly to another shore:
There seems no good alternative—
I mean well, but I mean to live.

TO MY LADY IN DISTRESS

Villanelle

SWEET my Lady, dry your eyes!
Tho' now I seem to serve you ill
My kingdom in the future lies.

Let evil stars in evil skies
Combine our happiness to kill—
Sweet my Lady, dry your eyes!

My heart is set on high emprise,
And there are ways to fortune still:
My kingdom in the future lies.

Some day with golden, glad surprise
The fairy heart of you I'll thrill:
Sweet my Lady, dry your eyes!

Then from this dingy life you'll rise
To a palace on a hill:
My kingdom in the future lies.

I fight a dragon for that prize:
I'll break the dragon's head, I will!
Sweet my Lady, dry your eyes—
Our kingdom in the future lies!

GOOD-BYE

Villanelle

ALL things are reapt beneath the sky,
And I'll be gone before the year:
Girl, in October we say good-bye!

Remember how the May was mere
With white and green and violet!
Remember all that followed, dear!

How June, with wreath and coronet
Of many roses amorous
Led us dreaming deeper yet!

Thro' red July victorious
To August, ample, passionate!
No lovers e'er had more than us.

Now bronze September soon will set:
I want no life extended drear
Till Youth and Summer we forget.

O Autumn, haunted, sweet and sere!
All things are reapt beneath the sky!
And I'll be gone before the year:
Girl, in October we say good-bye!

LADY OF VENTURES

Mirelle

LADY of Ventures weaving gold
From next to nothing tell me, pray,
Some novel thing to do! Unfold
Some fine employ or project bold
Or sly detour along my way!

From London town to far Cathay
The many live in drab durance:
But evermore your colors play,
Lady of Ventures, grave or gay,
Over the regions of Romance.

And some who find you sideways glance,
Nor scorn to reach thro' gates obscure
Forbidden vistas that entrance,
And glimmer with caprice and chance
To alter destinies grown dour.

Whether to some moonlit amour,
Or quest of hidden treasury,
Or valiant or outlandish lure,
They follow you, and think for sure
'Tis worth whatever the cost may be.

Thro' drear lanes of poverty,
Thro' little shops, and garrets old,
I've seen you wander truantly,
And pass tiptoe, and beckon me,—
O Lady of Ventures weaving gold!

CHINATOWN CHANT

I GO down to Dupont Street
See my very good friend:
I have something good to eat
With my very good friend:
Feel damblue and want some fun,
Play fantan with Wun Fat Bun,
He think me just Number One,
He my very good friend.

Yim poi—I no care!
Yim poi—you no care!

Sometime good time alla time maybe!
We no care—yim poi!

Hello, how do, come in, sit down!
You my very good friend!
You come best place in Chinatown,
You my very good friend!
Too much cold and rain in street,
You look sick, me stand you treat,
Fix up something good to eat
For my very good friend.

Yim poi—I no care!
Yim poi—you no care!

Sometime good time alla time maybe!
We no care—yim poi!

S'pose you like some extra-dry,
 You my very good friend:
S'pose you like some mo-goo-guy,
 You my very good friend!
Birdnest soup and some shark-fin,
Bamboo-stick in chicken-wing,
Mushroom stew with everything
 For my very good friend.

Yim poi—I no care!
 Yim poi—you no care!
Sometime good time alla time may be!
 We no care—yim poi!

Plenty eat and plenty drink
 For my very good friend!
You stay here all night I think,
 You my very good friend!
I lock fast big outside door,
Have best time you had before,
Sing-song girlie come some more
 For my very good friend.

Yim poi—I no care!
 Yim poi—you no care!
Sometime good time alla time maybe!
 We no care—yim poi!

Sing-song girlie dance for you,
 Sing, my very good friend!
No more now you feel damblue,
 Sing, my very good friend!
Too much drink and too much fun
Just enough for Number One,
You know nothing when you done,
 O my very good friend!

 Yim poi—I no care!
 Yim poi—you no care!
Sometime good time alla time maybe!
 We no care—yim poi!

LONE WOLF LAMENT

Drink if you will to happy days
And things to be—but say,
Where are the fellows I used to know?
Where are my friends to-day?

Wow! Hear me howl!
For Shad and Pete and George and Jack
Who took the long trail and left no track:
O, never a one of them all comes back,
And the winter-time is here!
Wow! Hear me howl!
For Olive and June and white Irene,
And the Mexican Kid and little Corinne:
Daughters of joy who have not been seen
This many and many a year!
I'm a lone old wolf, and I've lost my pack,
And the winter-time is here:
Wow! Hear me howl!

Many are gay and many are fair,
And some still come at my call:
But I've gone lame, and can run no more,
So what's the use of it all?

I dreamed last night I ran with them
Under a gold-red sky,
Where the mountains rose from the green prairie—
And I woke and wisht to die.

Drink if you will, and drink on me!

But this is the toast I give:

Live hard with your pack and live yourselves out—

Then ask no more to live.

Wow! Hear me howl!

For Shad and Pete and George and Jack

Who took the long trail and left no track:

O, never a one of them all comes back,

And the winter-time is here!

Wow! Hear me howl!

For Olive and June and white Irene,

And the Mexican Kid and little Corinne:

Daughters of joy who have not been seen

This many and many a year!

I'm a lone old wolf and I've lost my pack,

And the winter-time is here!

Wow! Hear me howl!

LAUGHTER

GLORY be, the corner is turned,
And we've given the slip to the old Hoodoo!

Come, Moriarty, I think we've earned
The right to loaf, don't you?

Our score is paid, and we've money galore,
Enough to last us a month or more,

And never a thing to do!

You're hungry you say? Well, I am too,
But stroll this way for half a mile,
Sure the sun is good this afternoon,
Good for a pasty-faced gossoon!

Like you, d'ye hear, Moriarty?

Aye, 'tis a blessed afternoon

For you, ye prison-faced gossoon!

And you're lucky that some are dead!

I'm talking too loud? Aw—go on!

That red liquor has gone to my head,

But I know what I'm doing I tell you!

There's none in this town that you're frightened to meet

And I'm not the sort that would sell you.

But you're hungry you say—you want to eat?

Well, come with me to Easy Street,

And I'll show you a tavern to your taste—

To your taste, d'ye hear, Moriarty?

* * * * *

Aw, take your time, boy! What's the haste?

There, where you see that ugly baste

Ayont the Barbecue,

Where the lettering is half erased,

'Twas gold when it was new.

Make out that name there if you can
With your cock-eye: *The Black-and-Tan*:
That's it: 'tis kept by a Mexican,

And that's where we dine, Moriarty!
It has a long deep-raftered room
In the Mission style; 'tis a man's room.
And sure you'll like this Mexican,
A fellow to follow a light amour,
A picaroon and a troubadour,
Much of your sort, Moriarty!

* * * * *

Hey, Miguel! Come hear me tell
This hungry friend of mine
How this joint of yours is for epicures
Who like a shady place to dine!
See this long deep-raftered room,
Half alight and half in gloom,
And yonder a cactus red in bloom,

Just to your taste, Moriarty!
Somehow it puts me in mind of Yvette:
You remember—little Yvette?
Will you ever forget that night when she trackt us
Into the old Savoy, and cried
For us to take her East again,
And we hadn't the price—and then—and then—
All right, Miguel, by the window here:
That horrible rope—it turns me queer
To think of it yet—poor little Yvette—

She always was fond of a cactus!

Yes, beer, Moriarty, beer!

Then order whatever you wish—a dish
Of chowder, perhaps a sole,
Or some foreign thing en casserole,
They're great on that line here!

You leave it to me? Well, on the whole
Of things come far and things come near
I fancy an onion omelette
With bacon on the side!
Or what do you say to a steak Creole
With sweet potatoes fried?
You like these things done Spanish,
And it isn't a Friday yet?
New raisins then and a pint of port
To finish on; they say 'tis good
To iron the blood of a broken sport,
And they keep it here in the wood.

* * * * *

Moriarty, what are ye thinking of?
Be easy, lad! By the lovely dove,
Myself—I could sit in this place for hours!
Those red flowers in the window set
Where the wind gets at them—damn it all
To me they seem to lift and fall
Like the red skirts of little Yvette,
When she danced at the carnival!
Moriarty, lad, if we only knew—
Eh? O, yes! That's all—thank you—
That's all, Miguel, thank you—thank you—
But serve it up hot and Spanish!
And now while I roll me a cigarette
Tune up that old guitar
And sing while we wait, Moriarty!
Sing new songs, and sing till you banish
Out of my heart this gray regret;
Sure that's what you're for, Moriarty!

Sing new songs to that old guitar
Of things come near and things come far,
While I forget, forget, forget,
Watching the rings from my cigarette
Rise to the rafters and vanish!

* * * * *

Watching the rings! How each of them alters!
Each of them alters and alters—and alters—
Moriarty!—see—they're swinging like halters
Just over our heads as they climb!
And after—and after—and after—
Christ! hear that devilish laughter—
That devilish gurgle and laughter!
And there!—see there how each rafter
Is red—dripping red all the time!

* * * * *

No, no, Miguel—I'm well, man—I'm well!
My nerves, that's all! It's passing—this spell:
Moriarty can tell—there's nothing to tell!
Roll me another cigarette,
And sing, damn you! Sing and forget
That laughter—ghost laughter—hereafter!

BALLADE OF THE BODY DISEASED

TO think the sky should be so blue,
And the air still yield its clean caress!
That I should see these flowers that strew
The altar of God's loveliness
And cease adoring now! Ah yes,
But something foul within me squirms
A trail of bloody rottenness!
I will not live upon these terms.

Must I who had of youth and bliss
In fullest measure be content
Merely to live in mire like this?
Shall my remaining days be spent
And my loved body now be lent
As stuff that alters or confirms
Some medical experiment?
I will not live upon these terms.

I shall end it when I choose
If it can end so easily!
Dripping Upas avenues
Before me loom unhappily:
Things magnified too monstrously
From infinite mephitic germs
Are loosed on me indecently:
I will not live upon these terms.

O stricken body, now for you
Decay, and the silent work of worms!
To think the sky should be so blue!
I will not live upon these terms.

ELYSIUM

Villanelle

MOTHER, for a moment come
To the bars that intervene:
Tell me of Elysium!

Tell me how you live serene
Upon that fair and lovely shore:
Free of grief and burdens mean!

For I so broken am and sore
To me God's mercy now 'twould seem
To die indeed and be no more.

You are with the Seraphim,
While below I wander on,
Groping through a fearful dream.

My love of life at last is gone:
Of life what favor may I glean
Outvaluing oblivion?

Here for dim relief I lean:
O Mother, for a moment come
To the bars that intervene!
Unveil, unveil Elysium!

JILL

1

DOCTOR, I want to be out of this:
There is no play nor profit here;
'Tis all so chemical and queer;
For things outworn or things I wish
Life now is stale, now feverish,—
I cannot sleep.

2

A burden on my heart is lain
Of thin, delirious desires;
I feel the flash of eerie fires
In the cloudy opal of my brain;
I wish I knew some medicine
To cure it all.

3

There was a girl named Jill I met
Vacation time at Juniper,
And I was like a boy with her
Had never cared for women yet;
I mind how in the red sunset
She called to me.

4

Among the hills I heard her sing,
And in glad mood I went to her;
I thought the emerald glimmer
Of her slant eyes a magic thing;
Some oddness in her raimenting,
Some fashion old,

5

Just a touch on a simple gown
 Of the silk of some past dynasty,
 And she wore a collar of lace quaintly
 At her tan throat; her hair was down;
 Her shapely arms were bare and brown:
 And she called to me.

6

O, she was a jolly hoyden, Jill!
 But the savor of her lips to me
 Was sweet as a late wild strawberry
 Found large and red on a sunburnt hill;
 And I yielded to her pretty will
 And waywardness.

7

Give me the fine cool touch of her!
 I've had my fill of sweets and sours
 With merry lovers of late hours,
 And little now my pulses stir
 For game, or dance, or theatre,
 Or deep carouse.

8

I think to live with such a lass
 Were better than the best of these:
 Unfailing as the field daisies,
 And clean and constant as the grass:
 All green delight young summer has
 I found in her.

Now I nor wine nor women prize;
 But I'd follow you up any hill
 For just a pail of water, Jill,
 And the right to look in your slant eyes
 Till life grew strong and sane and wise
 For me again.

But a burden on my heart is lain
 Of thin, delirious desires;
 I feel the flash of eerie fires
 In the cloudy opal of my brain;
 I wish I knew some medicine
 To cure it all.

Doctor, if I could hear her sing
 As 'mong the hills at Juniper
 I think this pestilent fever
 Would pass like vapor scattering
 Before a breeze, or else something
 Come fine as that!

For even just to think of her
 Is grateful to me as the prime
 Glory of the morning-time;
 A memory in lavender
 Of youth foot-loose in a wide summer
 She is to me.

13

Doctor, I need to be free, I guess!
 Free to go once more to her
 Among the hills in the white clover
 And share in her cool waywardness;
 'Twould cure me of this dull sickness,
 And I would sleep.

14

Yes, I would sleep with a sleep supreme
 Till all that frets me now were gone;
 And I would wake in young fashion
 To healthy ways of hill and stream,
 And all the joy of life would seem
 To be with Jill.

15

So handsome she is in the hill-country!
 Set in her sunbrowned face slant-wise,
 Doctor, she has green glorious eyes;
 Oh, if I were only free,
 If I could rise of God's mercy
 And go to her!

16

But a burden on my heart is lain
 Of thin, delirious desires;
 I feel the flash of eerie fires
 In the cloudy opal of my brain;
 I wish I knew some medicine
 To cure it all!

THE SUICIDE

1

I CAME away from a sodden grave
Feeling I had no soul to save:
Only I shivered chill and faint
Already with the graveyard taint.

2

From myself I seemed to shrink:
Of the coming end I would not think:
But I wandered all adread
In a dream of being dead.

3

The wind rose up against the moon
With a ghoulish whisper: Soon, soon!
While over the dim November town
Like a black opal night came down.

4

All unavailing I had come
To a widespread city slum:
A yellow blur thro' darkness seen,
Gashed with infernal red and green.

5

It was a most polluted zone
Of crumbling brick and grimy stone,
Where evil mouldered old and dank,
And thugs and thieves and harlots drank.

6

Nightlong its streets were doomed to be
 Lurid lanes of infamy;
 Made for denizens who dwell
 Fitly in the stews of Hell.

7

Yet to its first saloon I fled
 For the feel of liquor in my head:
 For the warm, slow, low release
 Of stupor in the stead of peace.

8

One drink—then shuddering I withdrew
 From the poor besotted crew:
 Better the aura of despair
 Than any reeking solace there.

9

From myself I seemed to shrink:
 Of the coming end I would not think:
 But still I wandered all adread
 In a dream of being dead.

10

The wind rose up against the moon
 With a ghoulish whisper: Soon, soon!
 While over the dim November town
 Like a black opal night came down.

11

By a church I stood of an age agone,
 And its gothic portals gazed upon:
 Grim saints there hailed the Crucified:
 A painted girl was by my side.

Forty-nine

12

Glint o' the moon on window-pane:
 Garnet and gold where the Lamb was slain:
 But dark and silent all within:
 And we without like shades of sin.

13

The painted girl made low moan,
 Leaning against the carven stone,
 Then turned to me with doubtful stare:
 A hood fell back from her raven hair.

14

What heart I had went out to her
 Because her eyes were sinister,
 And wan disease and poverty
 Despoiled a face still fair to see.

15

As we were in some vaulted aisle,
 In low tones we talked awhile:
 We talked as those before the dead:
 Something of this I mind she said:

16

“Once with my baby I came here:
 Once in the young, enchanted year:
 The leaves were little and green with spring,
 And here we came for the christening.

17

“That was a time that I could bless
 Everything in my happiness:
 Then blackness came, and burial—
 And I lost all, and all, and all.

18

“Now every day that dawns for me
 Weighs me down with misery:—
 But come to-night and be my friend:
 To-night for me may be the end.”

19

Then thro’ alternate glare and gloom
 I followed her to an attic room:
 A candle there was to see it by—
 God, ’twas a drear place to die!

20

Tho’ I had bought upon the way
 Good rum to deaden our dismay,
 Yet still I shivered chill and faint
 Already with the graveyard taint.

21

The rum was on the table set
 When she drew from her breast an amulet,
 And there fell in her hand, as she touched a spring,
 A powder white and glistening.

22

“Friend, I am weary of my years!
 Of the strain and pain and useless tears!
 This little powder is so full of sleep—
 Take it—and wake no more to weep!

23

“You, I know, won’t stay my hand!
 You go my way—you understand!”
 Then on the rum the powder gleamed:
 Swift she drank it; soon she dreamed.

24

Awhile she told a tale to me
Of a strange lover, absently:
Awhile she muttered of a child
From her side by Death beguiled.

25

Then she had a fancy sweet
Of rambling thro' a field of wheat
Where flaming scarlet poppies grew:
And the sun sank low; and the sky was blue.

26

With closing eyes, and drooping head,
I lifted her to the mean bed,
And white and quiet there she lay—
Already she was on her way.

27

Something I found of the powder lit
Upon her glass; I drank from it:
Filled it again and yet again—
Reeled, and sank beside her then.

28

Thro' the long night as she had died
The painted girl lay by my side:
In the gray of dawn by a creaking stair
I crept away and left her there.

THE TIGER OF DESIRE

Villanelle

STARVING, savage, I aspire
To the red meat of all the World:
I am the Tiger of Desire!

With teeth bared, and claws uncurled,
By leave o' God I creep to slay
The innocent of all the World.

Out of the yellow glaring day,
When I glut my appetite,
To my lair I slink away.

But in the black returning night
I leap resistless on my prey,
Mad with agony and fright.

The quick flesh I tear away,
Writhing till the blood is hurled
On leaf and flower and sodden clay.

My teeth are bared, my claws uncurled,
Of the red meat I never tire;
In the black jungle of the World
I am the Tiger of Desire!

BALLADE OF WOEFUL CERTAINTIES

WE must kill if we would live:
This is the first of certainties:
God leaves us no alternative
Despite the preachers' sophistries:
Let them argue as they please
The jungle law is over us!
For any man who cares or sees
This World of ours goes ruinous.

We must weak and ugly grow:
This is the worst of certainties:
'Tis a pretty thing to be young, I know,
And life is full of pleasantries:
But age and pain will bend the knees
Of the strongest, fairest, best of us:
No bodies reach beyond disease:
This World of ours goes ruinous.

We must all in the graveyard lie:
This is the last of certainties:
Strange horizons some descry,
That to the mass are fantasies:
But take your choice of theories
To meet an end so villainous,
In this at least each one agrees:
This World of ours goes ruinous.

Brother, I see too much to think
That dust is the utter end of us:
But oft from what's involved I shrink:
This World of ours goes ruinous.

BALLADE OF EVIL

EVIL! What poor argument
We mortals hear to make us trust
That as for God he never meant
To bait this hook of pain with lust!
Then by what devil was it thrust
Thro' the filmy first upheaval
Of our planetary dust?
No man knoweth the end of evil.

By dint of wishing, sages say,
Things shape themselves much as we see;
And filth and pain are the price we pay
Largely for the will to be;
That we evolve contingently
On such acceptance and receival:
Is this the measure of God's mercy?
No man knoweth the end of evil.

Say if you choose there is naught but good:
Harden your heart and soften your brain:
Say wrong is right misunderstood:
Close your eyes to filth and pain:
Swear all is right and all is sane,
And all correct from days primeval:
And then—well, then what will you gain?
No man knoweth the end of evil.

We strive in mud forever obscure,
Forever in hope of some reprieval,
But living or dead we are not sure:
No man knoweth the end of evil.

BALLADE OF THE SELF CONCEALED

THIS of you is not the best,
This little self so anxious here:
Partially you manifest,
But you are other than the mere
Mind and body you appear:
Behind the scenes it seems to me,
From day to day and year to year,
You remain essentially.

You wake and sleep: the small impress
Of things around soon passes: still
This consciousness is more or less
Some phosphorescence of the Will:
A surface light too weak to fill
The underlying entity
Whose lust of living naught may kill:
You remain essentially.

And while your body wears away,
And all your thoughts disintegrate,
You weave new vestures every day,
And dreams with dreams obliterate:
For you the outer ways await
Because of your desire to be:
But high or low, thro' every state,
You remain essentially.

From life to life you dwell within
A candle gleam of memory;
And as it vanishes—what then?
You remain essentially.

BALLADE OF THE MYSTIC AND THE MUD

If I from universal mud
By chance malign came bubbling
Uncouthly into flesh and blood,
Ugly, futile, struggling,
All in mud again to bring,—
Why then at the heart of me
What is this that needs must sing?
There is no end to mystery.

If I, with reverence, would read
Upon the mud God's autograph,
And find instead a wormy screed,
With never a sign on my behalf
To light my coming epitaph,—
Why then at the heart of me
What is this that needs must laugh?
There is no end to mystery.

If I, a mere automaton
In a brief and paltry play,
Am but a group of atoms drawn
Powerless upon my way
To mud again, as savants say,—
Why then at the heart of me
What is this that needs must pray?
There is no end to mystery.

Brother, kneel intuitive
To a stone if you will, or a carven tree!
And sing and laugh and pray—and live!
There is no end to mystery.

BALLADE OF COMFORTABLE DOCTRINE

SO we have come to life, it seems,
And would escape the consequence;
And many men, with many schemes,
Would tell us how and why and whence;
Good friends, I do you reverence,
But weary of your subtleties:
I only pray, when we go hence,
God will put us all at ease.

Maybe some Jack-o'-Lantern gleams
Across the swamp of my offence;
Maybe too high my heart esteems
God's ultimate benevolence;
Of knowledge I make no pretence,
My one religion's been to please,
But this I hold in confidence:
God will put us all at ease.

By night more faith I have in dreams
Than ever by day in common-sense;
And there's more of night than day meseems,
And weird deeps beyond science
To test our wee intelligence
And little glow-worm theories:
At night I think, for recompense,
God will put us all at ease.

Brother, I find some evidence,
Despite our many miseries,
That after life's last negligence
God will put us all at ease.

QUESTION

SOME cool and patient presence I recall
Vaguely thro' my troubled memory
When I arise from my too frequent fall:
Who is this fellow that has charge of me?
There may be something in it, after all.

POLITY

WITH good-will, and a touch of mirth,
To clear and clean and plant and plan
The common levels of the Earth:—
What more should God then ask of Man?

ECONOMY

THE fine contempt that Christ felt
For his coat, and cash, and wherewithal,
Is a virtue too occasional
Methinks for our continuance!

JUSTICE

S PARE him, you say! So be it, then!
But I think it a maudlin kindliness,
And fear some day for better men
'Twill breed a villainous excess!

'Tis easy enough to be merciful,
But to be just is an excellence
Beyond all flight of sentiment!

PERSISTENCE

THE pains of Life are all too many,
And the Way is doubtful everywhere;
But I have gone as far as any,
And seen—and I do not despair!

ASPIRATION

BUT give me the air! Always the air!
The clean ways, and wings, wings,
To reach beyond accepted things,
And venture flights unendable!

PROTEST

THESE moralists are growing overnice:
Surely, my friend, some need there is for spice!
 The salt and pepper of impropriety—
I would not call it vice.

ALARM

I DEPEND upon a friend,
But now I think a worm
 Might rightly twist itself by way of sneer
 At all this talk of over-ruling love:
There is some dictum, old or new,
I leave it you,
As below so above:
An that be true there's much to fear:
Give me a sword! I hear
The hiss of the universal snake! I hear
The abysmal growl of existence!

LOVE

LOVE will ever find a way
To turn the darkest night to day:
Out of chaos and mischance,
And every wicked circumstance,
'Twill build itself a home again
Within the hearts of erring men;
But hell is made by its inhabitants.

WHITE MAGIC

CANDOR may be devilish,
And truth untimely open Hell:
Better pretend the thing you wish;
Anon you may, if you wish and wish,
Achieve a miracle.

Once an ugly truth I saw,
And I hid it with a lie;
Cunning, for I knew the law,
I covered it, and smothered it,
And killed it with a lie:
No man there was that knew of it,
And many days went by.

Lo, something fair hath risen like
A lily from the sod!
And the lie is now the truth of it,
Become the splendid truth of it,—
Glory be to God!

THE ARTIZAN

GIVE me thick material!
Stuff to mould!
O the wonder and the feel of it
When I control and hold!
What nobler is there in your thin ethereal?
In gas than gold?
God himself must be fascinated with matter—
Seeing he has made so much of it.

PRAYER FOR A DEAD FRIEND

SAY no word to me of his bad ways;
I knew them well enough—his faults—his flaws:
Because he guarded me thro' desperate days
I do not care how much a liar he was!

He will be seen no more of you or me:
He was an evil man the good folk say:
I light this incense to his memory:
Because of him I go alive to-day.

I know not what it means, this being dead:
Awake, asleep, somewhere beyond the rim:
But to myself these many hours I've said,
Murmuring as in some temple, quiet, dim:

Good Will of all the World, be good to him!
Good Will of all the World recover him!
Out of the dark be tender to his need,
Whatever it may be, since he is dead!
Good Will of all the World, be good to him!

THE JEWEL THAT CAME

ONCE an artless maiden,
Fair and sweet,
Knelt too low, they say,
At an idol's feet,—
Just the usual idol
Made of the usual clay,
That went to dust entirely
In the usual way.

Alas and alas for a maiden
Put to scorn!
All soiled with the dust of her idol,
And left forlorn!
But in the dust she found
A jewel one day—
A jewel of wondrous beauty,
So they say.

Then she sang: “Now little I care
For the World so cruel;—
O what were the World to me
Without my jewel!
For this—ah, this is the heart
Of my idol of clay!
And I’ll keep it and love it forever—
Whatever they say!”

CHOICE

WELL, if that's our fate,
I would rather go down with those I love
Than float among those I hate.

NOW THEN

THERE'S very little honey
These days for any man:
Take it where you find it!
Taste it while you can!

BROKEN DAYS

1

I MIND no more, nor care to understand,
Those dull brutalities too long endured ;
I only thought of work as I came forth
 Most fitted to my convalescent hand ;
Of old ambitions haply I am cured.
This city builded nobly in the North
Affords me refuge from an outworn land.

2

Somewhile I drifted without any plans,
And found no place until this night work came
For words misspelt and letters gone askew
In the rigmarole the glum proof-reader scans.
I've now good lodging of a simple dame
In a cottage rustic where all else is new
On a quiet street of decent artizans.

3

I wonder what she was at seventeen,
This landlady of mine so withered now
With three score round of years. Her cheeriness
O'ercomes her poverty and widowed mien ;
She treasures little things, and tells me how
She keeps the fashion of her Sabbath dress,—
Her velvet bonnet and silk grenadine.

4

Her cottage has a wholesome atmosphere
 Of golden thyme and rue and mignonette;
 It seems from days too secular withdrawn,
 A place to meditate, or in austere
 Clean solitude to sleep and to forget
 The inevitable ache of things forgone;
 'Twas surely some good fairy led me here.

5

My room is high and bare; a window shows
 A maple tree without where sparrows keep
 In constant parlement; the other looks
 Blankly 'gainst a wall; that one I close.
 To ease my soul I laid upon a heap
 Of long unopened Calvinistic books
 The splendid contradiction of a rose.

6

As some be curious in choice of wines
 From wattled bottles and monastic jugs,
 Or crusted kegs in roguish cellars hid,
 So I've been fond with many anodynes,
 Most dopy sirops and oblivious drugs,
 To baffle pain and droop the uneasy lid,
 And loose the soul from all its rough confines.

7

But now to wines or drugs I give no thought,
 Nor seek relief as in my evil day
 When evil things conspired to batter me
 Until with stress and anguish overwrought
 I think some rampart of my brain gave way;
 For in the truce of this pale apathy
 The past appears a dream—the future naught.

8

In a grimy office of the *Daily Blink*
 A reader's desk is set apart for me,
 And there at night I work from eight till four
 The wage is fair, with little need to think;
 In automatic way unerringly,
 Tho' but a novice, I correct and score
 The acrid galley rank with printer's ink.

9

A cozy creamerie they call the *Star*
 At one o'clock I visit hungrily,
 For rolls and coffee and a bowl of soup;
 The place is spotless kept, and popular
 With sober night-hawks dining frugally;
 Me they class there with a favored group—
 Good fellows all as printers always are.

10

'Tis well nigh dawn before I find my bed
 Where everything is clean prepared for me.
 A monoplane of dreams with wings unfurled
 I fancy it, the pillow 'neath my head,
 As smoothly up some vast acclivity
 In spreading spiral ways I leave the World;
 Of it and all things over-wearied.

11

Luxurious I sleep the morning through,
 Or lie awake, inert, with lazy eyes
 Fixt on the bars of light that slip between
 The close green-shuttered windows palely blue.
 And under no compulsion yet to rise,
 And with no mordant thought to intervene,
 I doze and dream alternately till two.

12

And day by day thus unconcerned I live,
 Forgetting former things that did me wrong;
 Thankful for this safe obscurity,
 And glad for the added comfort I can give
 One poor old woman who has lived too long;
 Of late I find her growing motherly,
 And in her harmless way inquisitive.

13

She wonders much at me and at my ways;
 I am to her a man of mystery,
 Because I breakfast in the afternoon.
 But pleased she always is to have me praise
 Her toast and marmalade and good black tea;
 And the porridge bowl, and her last silver spoon,
 Worn thin with usage since Victorian days.

14

And in that hour of other times she talks;
 Once this cottage was the Manse, she says,
 And the city reached not here to bar at all
 The Minister from his long evening walks;
 It vexes her to see brick terraces
 Now crowding 'gainst the very garden wall
 Where still his sunflowers grow, and hollyhocks.

15

Yestermorn with plaintive roundelay
 Came to our street the hurdy-gurdy man;
 The wheeling melody of his machine
 Gave color to my dreaming as I lay,
 Remote as some Tibetan caravan,
 Or marvel once of Marco Polo seen
 Down jaded avenues of old Cathay.

16

The rudest music heard thro' sleep is fine
 Beyond the reach of art or instruments;
 With tunefulest high magic I have crost
 Over the violet edge of lands divine,
 And lifting many jeweled trophies thence
 I wake with joy—but waking they are lost
 Along the dim dream-tangled border line.

17

A wind-swept common far from streets and towers
 I found to-day with thistles overrun;
 The year is on the turn, the summer yields,
 The waning season all the air endowers
 With the deeper gold of our September sun,
 Reluctant yet to leave the long-loved fields,
 Now mauve and blue with elvish autumn flowers.

18

For me what remnant fate remains in store?
 What dull or useless ending will be mine?
 I count these days detached, this work unplaced,
 I know the best of me has gone before,
 And all that youth once promised I resign;
 But lone on that allegiant floral waste
 I bared my head to Beauty evermore.

19

And still she comes to me, tho' I be old,
 Living in covered ways and namelessly;
 And still her fields of amaranth await,
 And glorious across the manifold
 Dim valleys of the dead exalt I see
 Her azure gardens gleaming, and the great
 Marble towers of morning tipt with gold.

BALLADE OF RAGS

O NCE to my fancy I was drest,
Ready to challenge the ways of chance:
Body and bone were of the best,
And I rode away in the blue distance
And ravisht Life in high joyance
Of all her many beauties: Hey,
How now with altered countenance
I go in the rags of a younger day!

Once I went largely at my ease,
And humored myself with fine gusto;
Nor riches then, nor dignities
I sought, but the rare scenario
Where love is wrought to a rosy glow
With clinging to forbidden clay:
And I had it and had it and had it—so
I go in the rags of a younger day!

I have no heart for the poverty
That comes to all—you understand:
Yet with these relics left to me,
This jewell, this ribbon contraband,
From my illicit vanisht land,
I keep what fashion I may—but say
Is there no future in my hand?
I go in the rags of a younger day!

O, tell me I'll travel sometime in style
To a fair estate so far and away!
For I sing me a weary tune the while
I go in the rags of a younger day!

SOME OTHER LIFE

Villanelle

I HAVE forgotten the kingdom where,
Young in a city of luxury,
I on a time was a lute-player.

Only I know the gods were there
Brooding o'er us goldenly:
But I have forgotten the kingdom where.

I played where led a thorofare
In marble fine to the blue sea:
And I was an excellent lute-player.

Ever the early summer air
With flowers and fruits and love all free:
But I have forgotten the kingdom where.

Against this age I struggle and swear:
Pestered and pinned with puritanry:
I who once was a lute-player.

Still in my heart I dream how fair
That other life appeared to me:
But I have forgotten the kingdom where
I on a time was a lute-player.

BALLADE OF THE EASY WAY

GOD I think is a balancer,
And runs the World by compromise:
From brief observing I infer
 His line of least resistance lies
 Curving smoothly thro' the skies,
 Forever mixing night and day,
 With all that such a thing implies:
Myself, I go the easy way.

'Tis a good thing at times to fight:
 To give a blow, and take a blow,
And hand it back with gathered might:
 'Tis the bully plan of the World below:
 And yet somehow as we older grow
We're not so keen for every fray:
 We'd liefer miss than meet a foe:
Myself, I go the easy way.

Troubles a-plenty we may not pass:
 Tangles too many we cannot untie:
And there's a pitiful end for us all, alas!
 But we can slip round so much, if we try,
 Or stay things off till by and by
We find they mostly are off to stay,
 Or matter no more at all: that's why
Myself, I go the easy way.

And the value of laughter, the value of tears,
 And the meaning of Life may be as it may:
In the bitter-sweet wisdom of later years
 Myself, I go the easy way.

BALLADE OF FAITH

I THINK between my cradle-bars
 Of a summer night there fell to me
Some pale religion of the stars,
 While an old Moon lookt weirdly
At me thro' an apple-tree
And fixt my faith in a fair One
 Fading out of memory:
But I would that I knew where my Lord is gone!

Things there are by night I know
 That in the day I ne'er detect:
Stars that shine from long ago
 Until bewildered I suspect
The obvious World is not correct,
And fear too much to lean upon
 The showings of mere intellect:
But I would that I knew where my Lord is gone!

In my own fashion I persist:
 No counsel of despair I brook:
Neither for priest nor pessimist,
 Nor the jealous God nor his black Book:
My early faith I've not forsook
For the low things that pass anon:
 With eyes unspoiled to the stars I look—
But I would that I knew where my Lord is gone!

And caring less how the World esteems
 Me or my doing I go on
With incommunicable dreams—
 But I would that I knew where my Lord is gone!

DEPARTURE

LET me from this World go free
Before the last of me is spent!
While yet some few fair girls lament,
And some good fellows cherish me!

TO THE NIGHT

Cantel

GOOD luck to all who throng
The ways of laughter and song!
But if for some they seem too brief—
For some they seem too long.

Myself I have been a great thief
Of pleasure to lighten my grief,
But now—say now do you fancy it wrong
If I turn to the night for relief?

Good luck to all who throng
The ways of laughter and song!
But weary I turn to the night for relief—
And I pray that the night be long.

BALLADE OF SLEEP

I'VE lost my taste for things somehow
That on a time were very sweet:
Sin has no savor for me now,—
I find no apples good to eat:
You laugh, and say that I'm effete,
But you are on the way, my friend,
And after me you'll soon repeat:
Sleep is the best thing in the end.

Yet I come not with sour intent
Against my old desires to prate:
Truly I do not repent,
I only wish I knew some great
Exultant vice to stimulate
What spark of Life remains to spend:
But this I feel, as the hour grows late,
Sleep is the best thing in the end.

All things wear out, so much we see:
All things must fall without reprieve:
Yet spite of that invincibly
Upon the brink I still believe
That God has hidden up his sleeve
For us some golden dividend:
What think you then we shall receive?
Sleep is the best thing in the end.

Brother, down on a soundless bed
From the ways of pain may we descend!
The stars creep dimly overhead:—
Sleep is the best thing in the end.

BALLADE OF WAITING

THERE was a time that Death for me
 Unbalanced every new delight:
 Its cold abhorrent mystery
 Haunted me by day and night:
 I felt its noisome clammy blight
 Making of Life a mildewed thing:
 But now to its face I cry: Alright!
 I'm no afraid for the outgoing!

Because so many I loved have gone
 I stare a-wondering at the skies:
 The World below I look upon
 With listless, old, exhausted eyes:
 The while for every friend who dies
 I feel a queerish loosening
 Within of all familiar ties:
 I'm no afraid for the outgoing!

I weary under a weight of days,
 Withering and too sensible
 Of aged needs and altered ways:
 But this one thing is good to tell:
 In the wintry desert where I dwell
 Some rumor I have heard of Spring,
 And I have dreamed of asphodel:
 I'm no afraid for the outgoing!

The sweet renewal of the air,
 And the call of Youth recovering,—
 Do these await me yet somewhere?
 I'm no afraid for the outgoing!

WITH THE SEVEN SLEEPERS

Cantel

O FAIRY, take me far
To some enchanted star!
Let me go sleep for a thousand years
Where the Seven Sleepers are!

Beyond the striving spheres,
Beyond all hopes or fears,
Where never a black or golden bar
Of Hell or Heaven appears!

O Fairy, take me far
Away from things that are!
Let me go sleep for a thousand years
In some enchanted star!

THE ISLES OF GOLD

Cantel

A WAY from days too cold,
Away from hearts too old,
Honey-Mouth, O Honey-Mouth,
I go to the Isles of Gold!

Will it be to North or South
That I find them, Honey-Mouth?
The King no entry there I'm told
Except to the dead alloweth!

So be it, from days too cold!
So be it, from hearts too old!
Honey-Mouth, O Honey-Mouth,
I go to the Isles of Gold!

NOTES

BALLADE OF THE PICAROON:—"He has much wrong resting on himself, and has crept through the worm-holes of all sorts of errors, in order to be able to reach many obscure souls on their secret paths. Forever dwelling in some kind of love, and some kind of selfishness and enjoyment. Powerful and at the same time obscure and resigned. Constantly loafing in the sunshine, and yet knowing the ladder which leads to the sublime to be near at hand."

VILLANELLE OF MUTTON:—Dam—A coin I am told of small value, used somewhere in the Orient, perhaps India, and there giving rise to a familiar phrase, as did the coin known as a "rap" in Ireland. This in explanation, lest the writer be thought profane.

MIRELLE OF FOUND MONEY:—"Gerard de Nerval lived the transfigured inner life of the dreamer. 'I am very tired of life!' he says. And like so many dreamers, who have all the luminous darkness of the universe in their brains, he found his most precious and uninterrupted solitude in the crowded and more sordid streets of great cities."—Arthur Symons.

BALLADE OF FINE EATING:—In the matter of fine eating, and in maintaining it as something more than the meat, the good Sir Thomas Browne thus commended Epicurus: "He (Epicurus) was contented with bread and water, and when he would dine with Jove, and pretend unto epulation, he desired no other addition than a piece of Cytheridian cheese."

QUESTION, ET AL.:—In a little workshop under my hat are some broken ballades and unused lines, from which I have hastily contrived these few quatrains, having now neither time nor inclination to do more with them.

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